

REMARKS

Claims 1-24 remain pending in the present application. Claims 1-7 stand rejected and claims 8-24 stand withdrawn from consideration pursuant to the restriction requirement.

Applicants acknowledge their election of Group I, claims 1-7 for prosecution at this time and request reconsideration of the restriction requirement. Applicants respectfully submit that the process of Group I, as claimed, will necessarily make the products of claims 8-24, and that such products will not be "materially different", as suggested by the Examiner. In paragraph 2 of the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner states:

In the instant case, the process as claimed can be used to make other and materially different product non-woven fabric.

The Examiner's statement is merely a restatement of the requirement for restriction as set forth in MPEP 806.05(f)(1), and provides no example of a "materially different" product which could be made from the Group I process. Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner has not provided a sufficient basis for restriction.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Stokes in view of Dempsey

Claims 1-7 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as obvious over Stokes (U.S. Patent no. 5,424,115) in view of Dempsey (U.S. Patent no. 3,427,376). Applicants traverse this basis for rejection and respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal thereof.

Nature of the Present Invention

In one embodiment, the present invention is a process of preparing a nonwoven sheet comprising point bonding the sheet on both sides by passing said sheet between embossing rolls at a combination of bonding temperature, pressure and residence time such that the majority of bond points are not bonded to the point of translucency (claim 1).

Applicants disclose that the bonding parameters required to obtain the conditions/results of claim 1, i.e. such that the bonds are not translucent, include

using an elastomer-coated backup roll having a Shore A hardness of 50-80, embossing roll temperatures between about 160-190 °C and bonding pressures which are the minimum necessary to provide structural integrity to the nonwoven sheet, such as from about 5-75 kN/m² (0.7-10.7 psi) (specification, page 4, line 23, bridging to page 5, line 6).

Prior Art

Stokes discloses point bonded nonwoven fabrics containing conjugate fibers of polyolefin/nylon which are bonded at bonding roll temperatures lower than about 10°C below the melting point of the polyolefin component at nip pressures on the raised bonding points of between about 3,000 to 180,000 psi (col. 2, lines 34-44). Stokes fails to disclose or suggest that his bonding process results in bond points which are not translucent, nor the desirability of the same.

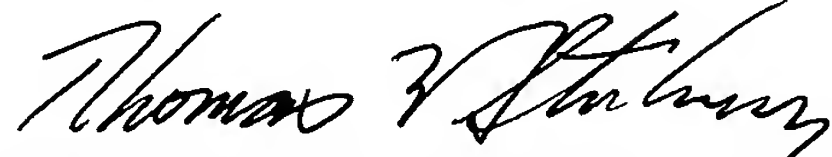
In contrast, Applicants disclose that to practice the presently claimed process, bonding pressures must be the minimum necessary for obtaining structural integrity of the fabrics, such as from about 5-75 kN/m² (0.7-10.7 psi), far below the bond pressures of Stokes.

Dempsey discloses a softening process for nonwoven fabrics, and in contrast to the present claims, distinctly discloses the use of point bonded sheets wherein the bond points have been bonded to the point of translucence (col. 5, lines 53-62), in direct contrast to the claims of the present invention.

Accordingly, it is clear that neither Stokes nor Dempsey disclose or suggest the process of the present invention, wherein a nonwoven sheet is point bonded on both sides, but not to the point of translucency of the bond points. Withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of the claims is requested.

In view of the foregoing, allowance of the above-referenced application is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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